

Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative MPRI e-news

THE MICHIGAN PRISONER REENTRY INITIATIVE; CREATING SAFER NEIGHBORHOODS AND BETTER CITIZENS

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Although no approach will completely eliminate crime, the MPRI reduces crime and the rate of those returning to prison

Director Caruso on MPRI

Patricia Caruso, Director of the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC), sat down with Jeff Padden, President of Public Policy Associates, Inc., to talk about MPRI, the impact of the Patrick Selepek incident, and the future of reentry in the state of Michigan.

The primary goal of the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative (MPRI) is to reduce crime by improving prisoners' plans as they re-enter Michigan's communities. Caruso described the future of MPRI in the Department of Corrections as it is integrated into the policy, culture, and operation of the Department.

Achieving the Mission

"I would say we're clearly headed down the road [of integrating MPRI in the Department], but we're not there yet. We're probably a couple years from that. We need to get to the point where reentry is part of the foundation and underpinnings of our Department."

"When you start a business, you generally need five years before you are profitable, time to lay down roots and do all the things you need to do. It's not that dissimilar from what we're doing... We're starting a new business in the Department of Corrections, and I think five years is a reasonable period of time to get those roots down. Our 'profit' is obviously going to be our results."



Creating safer neighborhoods

As MPRI is launched, our results will include fewer returns to prison because prisoners will be better prepared for the community and the community will be better prepared to hold the prisoner accountable while focusing on his or her successful transition.

Strategic planners and executive managers have expressed concerns about the effect Selepek may have on MPRI. When asked about this, Director Caruso responded, "There are two types of impact, long term and short term. We hope to prevent the knee-jerk reaction of entering into long-term policy decisions. We've seen several

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MPRI is giving Matt the tools to be successful. [more >](#)





Director Caruso on MPRI

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short-term effects. One of them was the drop in the number of parolees... Our job as educators is to remind those concerned that there are no guarantees with paroles. We also have to put more effort into our procedures... We obviously want to prevent innocent victims from getting hurt.”

The future of reentry

The future of MPRI remains in the ability of policymakers to continue to craft smart policy focused on community safety and offender accountability while local leaders chart the course for effective implementation. Even though no approach will completely eliminate crime, the strong state and local partnerships forged in MPRI ensure that the future of reentry in the state of Michigan is secure.

Spotlight on the FOA

As an MPRI partner, the MDOC assists the mission of the Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative by ensuring the delivery of critical services for offenders seamlessly from prison to the community. The MDOC Field Operations Administration (FOA) is responsible for providing parolees with the tools needed to be successful once they are released. Parole agents work in their communities to collaborate with service providers in order to reduce the former prisoners’ risk by re-connecting them to their families and the services they need.

Parole agents’ primary role of protecting the public is being improved through this community support. The role of the parole agent is to enforce the conditions of parole set by the Parole Board while assisting the offender in his or her transition back into the community.

Demonstration Project

During the summer of 2006, FOA will begin to further extend their public protection role by launching a demonstration project in the Capital Area MPRI Pilot Site (Ingham, Clinton and Eaton Counties) to develop and test a new Collaborative Case Management and Supervision (CCMS) System. The CCMS will be driven by information gathered by the COMPAS risk, needs and strengths assessment instrument. CCMS is the strategic and coordinated use of resources at the case level to enhance community safety. It seeks to reduce recidivism and relapse, encouraging prisoners and former prisoners to be successful, and helping them build the support network in their community they need to stay crime free. CCMS is an effective way to reduce crime by engaging

all partners in a unified process that holds offenders accountable for their behavior and increases the likelihood of their success. MPRI partners will create, maintain, and operate a seamless system of case management and supervision that includes assessment, planning, management, and collaboration that begins at intake to prison and continues through successful transition back into the community.

Better Tools Needed

Parole staff need better tools, better training, and more resources if they are expected to have a greater impact on parolee success, reduce crime and reduce the number of victims. Collaborative Case Management and Supervision will provide critical tools to parole agents to help offenders move toward changing their behavior and staying crime free. One of those tools is the COMPAS.

Parole agents assigned to the MPRI prison facilities will administer the COMPAS assessment tool for prisoners who will be returning to the Capital Area and Capital Area agents will complete some COMPAS assessment for parolees

Probation: A term of supervision afforded either a convicted felon or a convicted misdemeanor by a court as an alternative to prison or jail. Some judges may sentence offenders to a combination of both probation and jail or boot camp.

Parole: A term of community supervision afforded by the Parole Board to a prisoner who has served the minimum portion of his or her sentence, less good time or disciplinary credits if applicable.

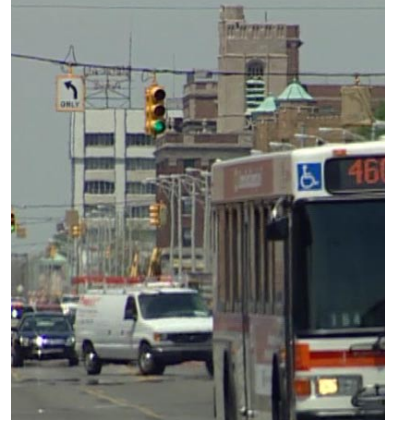
already in the community. The prisoner’s risk/need/strength profile will be used to determine the services and supervision plan or Transition Accountability Plan (TAP) for each returning prisoner. Although early in the development process, under the CCMS, offenders may be grouped into four different categories based in their profile:

- Basic ReEntry Services
- Intensive Case Management
- Intensive Surveillance
- Community Resources

Former prisoners will be reassessed using the COMPAS periodically to determine if, their risk to the community is being properly managed, their needs are being addressed; and their strengths are being built upon.

COMPAS Risk and Needs Assessment Instrument

BY R. DOUGLAS KOSINSKI, MANAGER RISK/CLASSIFICATION AND PROGRAM EVALUATION SECTION, MDOC



Effective risk assessment is critical to the effective implementation of MPRI. Two key principles that form the basis of MPRI are:

1. The Risk Principle

This principle is based on the premise that it is possible to predict offenders' behavior and that it is most effective to target those offenders with the highest risk and;

2. The Need Principle

This principle says in order to have the most effect we should focus our efforts on factors that cause crime (criminogenic) that can be changed (are dynamic).

To follow these principles, we must have a means to accurately measure the amount of risk an offender represents and determine what specific factors are most likely to cause new crimes and failures on parole. After a year-long process that involved staff from MDOC and other state departments and universities, the COMPAS instrument was selected to meet that need. COMPAS is a state-of-the-art assessment instrument that uses a combination of file information (e.g., criminal history, institutional behavior, programming, current offense, education, employment, family) and an offender back-

ground and attitudes survey to estimate risk and identify needs to target. The COMPAS has been around for several years and is currently used in California, New York, Georgia and over 40 counties and community corrections offices in Michigan.

The COMPAS assessment estimates risk in four areas:

- Violence
- New Crime
- Failure to Appear
- NonCompliance (Technical Violation)

Level of Need is reported in several areas, including: substance abuse, financial, education, criminal attitudes, family, housing and criminal associates.

A complete risk/need profile

The combination of these risks and needs assessments provides a complete "profile" of the offender which will be used to design a plan of supervision, programming and treatment to reduce the likelihood the offender will commit new crimes and will assist offenders in becoming law abiding, constructive members of society. In this way, MPRI will accomplish the

primary mission of the MDOC—protection of the public—in the most efficient and effective manner.

Multiple assessments

COMPAS assessments will be completed at various times while an offender is under the Department's jurisdiction. The first assessment will be done at intake to prison and will be used to develop a prison programming and treatment plan to prepare the offender for eventual release. A COMPAS assessment will also be done prior to release for development of a parole plan and again following release to evaluate progress and update supervision and treatment plans.

COMPAS is a cornerstone

In summary, COMPAS is one of the cornerstones of MPRI. Over the next months, it will be rolled out in MDOC prisons and MPRI pilot sites. The improved information produced will substantially enhance planning and decision making regarding offenders and contribute to the positive impact of the prisoner reentry effort.



Officer Myra Gracey and volunteers unload donated clothing and prepare them for the dry cleaners or the laundry facility.



Officer Myra Gracey sorts through donated clothes that will be distributed to one of the three Wayne County MPRI men's clothing site partner locations.

Wayne County MPRI partners with Detroit Police Department to establish men's clothing closets

Building on the success of existing partnerships and community collaborations, Wayne County MPRI partnered with the Detroit Police Department's Northwestern District to conduct a year-long, city-wide men's clothing drive.

The clothing drive launched in early February 2006. Within weeks Detroit police officers and the MPRI Community Coordinator delivered hundreds of shirts, pants, sweaters, socks, over 150 suits, overcoats and shoes to three MPRI community partner sites working to prepare ex-offenders for employment and job placement.

Detroit Police Partner with MPRI

To date, nearly 140 MPRI participants have received gently-worn suits, dress shoes, casual shoes, shirts, slacks, work clothes, jackets, and coats, primarily donated by officers of the Detroit Police Department and Detroit area churches. The Wayne County MPRI Men's Clothing Closets was established based on the belief that with the appropriate support, ex-offenders possess the capacity to transform their lives as they strive to achieve self-sufficiency, rebuild family and community ties, and most importantly, become assets to the communities to which they return.

Possible only with partners

Acknowledging the efforts of the Wayne County MPRI partners, Community Coordinator Tamela Aikens remarked, "I am convinced that looking good, contributes to feeling good, and the way we feel about ourselves is a direct reflection of how we feel about others - and that's enough hope to keep in one of [his] pockets. Being dressed, prepared, and ready for a job interview, or the business of life, will move us closer to putting money in his 'other' pocket, and that has been made possible by the support and commitment of these fine officers and our faith partners."

The clothing drive continues and donations are still being received at an impressive rate, but clothes are still needed. Faith institutions and organizations are encouraged to coordinate a drive within their organizations in partnership with Wayne County MPRI. For more information or to donate clothes, please contact Tamela Aikens at 313-456-4511 or Officer Myra Gracey at 313-596-5682.



The mission of MPRI is to reduce crime by implementing a seamless plan of services and supervision developed with each offender. To achieve this mission, every prisoner has to be part of the solution. Through MPRI, each prisoner is accountable for working with an MPRI transition team and developing and following a Transition Accountability Plan (TAP) that will focus the offender, the parole agent, and the community on offender success. This is the story of one prisoner who is making that transition.

By Mike Keck,
Supervisor, MDOC
Office of Field Programs

Former prisoner has tools to become a better citizen

When Matt was placed on probation in December 2002 he wasn't ready to change his life. He had recently failed a drug court treatment program as a result of his continued drug abuse. After receiving probation for Breaking and Entering and Credit Card Fraud—his fifth and sixth felonies—he was placed in a residential probation program to address his problems. Two months later he was in jail for threatening staff. Given another chance, he promised to succeed, but less than two months later he walked away from that program.

One of five children, Matt was the only one to get into trouble. He was first involved in the criminal justice system when he was 14 after he broke into a building. Continued legal problems and substance abuse followed, going from marijuana use at 15 to cocaine, alcohol, heroin, and prescription drug abuse. He attended several treatment programs with only short-term results. He said that with the death of his father in 1992, he developed an "I don't care" attitude. When sober, Matt could hold a job, but his drug abuse caused him to either quit or get fired from his last four jobs.

Taking Responsibility

Matt celebrated his 30th birthday in jail. Eight days later he walked into prison for the first time. That is when he said he decided to change his life. He became immersed in bettering himself. Matt said, "I decided I needed to change my life. I gave myself to God and did something everyday to better myself." Matt involved himself in substance abuse classes, business classes and working within the prison. Prior to his parole being granted in January of 2006, Matt was identified as a prisoner who could benefit from the

Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative because of his past. Matt agreed to the program, and in September, 2005, he was transferred to the Cotton Correctional Facility to participate. He was interested in the program and felt he could benefit from the additional assistance.

Transition Team Interaction

When Matt first walked into the meeting with his transition team in December he was a little shocked. There was a group of people in the room and one empty seat. At first he was overwhelmed, but soon became comfortable with the people. Everyone was friendly and treated him like a human being—a feeling he said he had not had in years. They discussed his problems and offered solutions to address his needs. Matt feels the transition team's commitment to MPRI has been key to his success and feels that providing adequate staffing, a change in the correctional culture, and leading by example are keys to the success of MPRI.

Using the Tools for Success

Upon his release in January, 2006, the transition team arranged employment for Matt through Michigan Works! They

also helped him obtain work clothes and boots and arranged for substance abuse counseling. Since that time Matt has obtained a better paying job, received a promotion, and has regularly attended his counseling, including self-help groups. Matt's parole agent says he has remained drug free and has a positive attitude. Before, his life was a constant struggle, now he has the tools for success and has developed a network of people interested in his success. His mother is extremely happy with the changes she has seen in Matt. She says he keeps in contact with people who have a vested interest in him and feels that MPRI has been a big influence in his ability to succeed.

Commit to Betterment

Matt appreciates the structure MPRI has given him and believes MPRI can benefit anyone willing to commit to a change for the better. Working with prisoners like Matt to have a plan in place for their return to the community, MPRI will reduce crime, create safer neighborhoods and make better citizens.

Getting Prisoners Back to Work

When we think of “Best Practices” we think in terms of what is working and where. One of the most difficult barriers a returning prisoner must face is seeking and securing employment. We know that when a transitioning prisoner is working, it reduces the risk of a new crime. For many returning prisoners, enough time has passed while they have been incarcerated for the employment market to change. In some cases, the changes are quite dramatic.

Imagine serving 10-20 years in prison and being told to put your resume into a computer. Imagine the same circumstances... how do you approach a potential employer? How do you answer the “silver bullet” questions such as: I see a gap in your employment history, can you tell me a little bit about this? Or: Have you ever been convicted of a felony?

By: Nancy Dargan and Yolanda Perez,
Your Community Liaisons
Round I sites have tackled this problem and are having impressive results.

Berrien County's One-Stop Center is an excellent example. They have braided numerous services such as:

- Resume development
 - Skill identification and career testing
 - Vocational training & retraining
 - Housing assistance
 - Transportation assistance
- Pooling the resources needed to address returning prisoners' needs is one of the keys that makes this a successful initiative. A site review conducted in April looked at both fiscal and programmatic progress and revealed a successful collaboration of resources.

Kalamazoo County runs a “Free Look” program. Utilizing MPRI funding, employers willing to consider an MPRI returning prisoner for employment are given an opportunity to have the returning prisoner work in what is considered a “short term” hire. Goodwill pays the salary/wage for the returning prisoner for a limited-term test period. This has resulted in successful employment placement for former prisoners involved with the Kalamazoo MPRI Program.



The Nine-County site hired an additional Employment Specialist with MDOC corrections officer experience to work with existing staff. Two full-time Employment Specialists provide Prison In-Reach services which include vocational assessments and orientation to vocational services. Those same staff members attend four transition team meetings monthly and deliver career planning, as well as job skills training to the former prisoners once they arrive in the community.

Further, they broker employment over an extensive geographical area and strategize with Michigan Works! “Business Liaisons”. Together, this team of vocational specialists has been highly successful with job placement and retention for returning prisoners to their area. They utilize subcontracts with GTP Industries to place former prisoners in temporary work experiences so those individuals are able to begin earning an income even though they have complex, special needs. The Employment Specialists collaborate closely with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) to serve those who cannot immediately return



to the labor market. The result is a dramatic increase of 500% in enrollment at MRS and an 80% employment rate with a 100% job retention at 45 days post release. In fact, one of the individuals enrolled in the “temporary work experiences” did so well that the employer hired them for a full-time permanent position.

Capital Area (another multi-county site) has a contract with Peckham for a work readiness program. If after working with an Employment Specialist and adhering to all requirements, the returning prisoner has not secured employment, they are placed at Peckham for transitional work. They gain employment soft and hard skills and may work there as long as 90 days while they seek and secure alternate long-term employment.

These are excellent examples of MPRI in action, helping returning prisoners get back into the workforce to become productive in their community, which creates safer neighborhoods and better citizens.

Round II Sites Complete Community Assessment

By Robb Burroughs,
Michigan Council on Crime
and Delinquency

Over the past several months, the newest MPRI sites have been busy completing their Community Assessments.

The assessment serves as a planning instrument to help each community create solutions to ensure returning prisoners have the tools needed to succeed in the community. The assessment requires each community to take an in-depth look at more than 15 service areas to identify and evaluate existing assets, the barriers that prevent returning prisoners from using those resources, and gaps where additional resources are needed. To ensure the best information was included in the assessment, each local Steering Team, with

the support of their Community Coordinator, engaged in an intensive community organizing effort. Betsy Maurer of Life-ways in Jackson explained, “The community engagement was amazing! We did not struggle to get the information we needed.” The experience in Jackson was not unique as every site found the involvement and expertise of the local community invaluable.

Over 400 resources identified

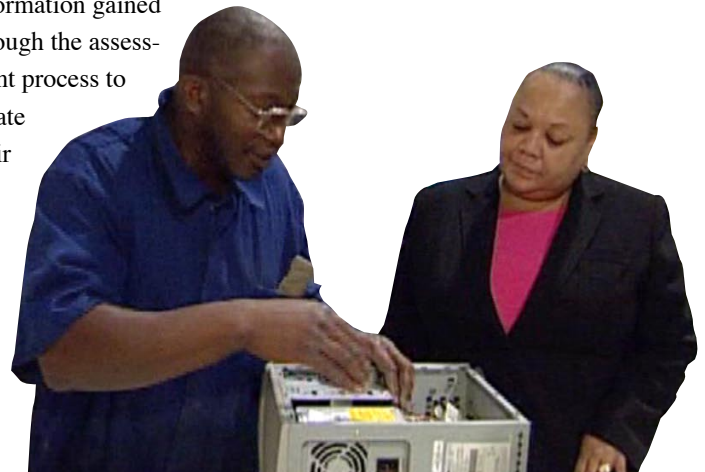
As a result of the process, the seven Round II sites have identified over 400 resources and services that currently exist in their communities to protect public safety and support a successful transition for returning prisoners back into the community. On the other hand, local teams now also have a clearer picture of gaps and barriers that prevent success

and facilitate a return to crime. Ernie Stacy, the Community Coordinator for Muskegon County, reported that the assessment process had the added benefit of increasing community awareness of the needs of returning prisoners and the positive impact of their success on community safety.

Clearly the starting point

The next step for the communities is to take the valuable information gained through the assessment process to create their

Comprehensive Plan for Prisoner ReEntry. Oakland County Community Coordinator Donna Wasiczko explained, “The Community Assessment is clearly the starting point for the strategic thinking leading not just to the Comprehensive Plan but also to the development of partnerships necessary for successful implementation of an effective system for prisoner reentry.”



Round I Sites

- Berrien County
- Capital Area
- Genesee County
- Kalamazoo County
- Kent County
- Macomb County
- Wayne County
- 9 County Rural Region

Round II Sites

- Calhoun County
- Jackson County
- Muskegon County
- Oakland County
- Saginaw County
- St. Clair County
- Washtenaw County

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